

WMU challenged to ‘unshakable pursuit’ of God’s mission

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DALLAS—Speakers at the 2018 National Woman’s Missionary Union Missions Celebration and annual meeting called Baptist women to the “unshakable pursuit” of God’s glory and God’s mission.

With 1 Corinthians 15:58 as their theme, missions speakers challenged Baptist women to “faithful, courageous, steadfast” devotion as they pursue the mission of the same God who pursued them.

“God has been pursuing you your whole life,” said WMU President Linda Cooper of Tompkinsville, Ky., urging Baptist women to enter into a “missional journey” wherever God leads.

“God has a plan for your life,” Cooper said. “His plan is for you to know him and help others do the same.”

Cooper was re-elected as president of national WMU at the annual meeting. Jackie Hardy of Social Circle, Ga., was elected recording secretary.

See where God is at work



Former Woman's Missionary Union presidents Kaye Miller (left) and Debby Ackerman speak June 10 at the WMU Missions Celebration general session in Dallas. They congratulated the Baptist Nursing Association on its 35th Anniversary. (Photo / Van Payne / SBC Newsroom)

Missionary speakers included two couples whose names were withheld due to security concerns in the areas where they serve.

One missionary described a Kurd who was “falsely accused of starting a political rebellion” and confined in a tiny cell. Through dreams and visions of Jesus, he became a follower of Christ.

The other missionary couple described how they initially worked among an unreached people group in Central Asia before transferring to Germany, due to family medical issues.

“We had to leave behind the people we loved,” one of the missionaries said.

However, in Germany, in addition to developing urban strategies to reach secular Germans, they also work with immigrants, refugees and other displaced people—including members of the same people group they sought to reach with the gospel in Central Asia.

“When you pray consistently, God will give you a new pair of glasses that allow you to see where he is at work,” one of the missionaries said.

‘Stand firm’

Irma Moss—a WMU leader in Florida—recalled how her father lost his business and his financial holdings after the Cuban Revolution. He left Cuba, where he had owned restaurants, to work 16-hour days as a dishwasher at restaurants in the United States.

When the last airplane bound for the United States left Cuba, Moss recalled, she and her mother and sister took the last available seats to be reunited with her father—even though her mother had been told it was impossible, because 13 other people were on a waiting list ahead of them.

From her mother, Moss said, she learned to “stand firm and not be shaken” in her faith, keeping her eyes on God.

David Melber, vice president of the Send Relief ministry at the North American Mission Board, reported on ministry to refugees and immigrants, victims of human trafficking and other vulnerable people.

He described the work of a ministry center in Clarkston, Ga., where missionaries minister in one of the most ethnically diverse areas of the United States, and another ministry center that addresses poverty in Appalachia. Additional ministry centers are planned in Puerto Rico, Las Vegas and New York, he reported.

‘A beautiful and broken place’



Kempton and Caryn Turner, church planters in East St. Louis, Ill., church planters with the North American Mission Board, share their story with NAMB President Kevin Ezell during the Woman's Missionary Union annual meeting in Dallas. Their church plant, City of Joy Fellowship, focuses on the tough inner city where Kempton grew up. (Photo / Van Payne / SBC Newsroom)

NAMB President Kevin Ezell moderated a discussion with Kempton and Caryn Turner, missionaries and church planters in East St. Louis, Ill.

Turner, pastor of City of Joy Fellowship in East St. Louis, described his city as "a beautiful and deeply broken place."

He talked about growing up in the gang-ridden neighborhoods of the southern Illinois city before his family moved to Houston. Later, during a trip to New Orleans in which he intended to sample all the sin that city could offer, he met a couple who shared the gospel with him.

"I was saved on Bourbon Street," he said.

Serving in East St. Louis with his wife and their five children, he is seeking to create avenues to share that same life-changing gospel message in a city where 45 percent of the people live below the poverty line.

City of Joy has been instrumental in creating community development initiatives to learn job skills while repairing and renovating homes.

‘Power to change lives’



Ruba Abbassi (left) of Arab Women Today received the 2018 Dellanna West O'Brien Award for Women's Leadership Development from Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union, June 10 during the opening session of the 2018 WMU Annual Meeting in Dallas. (Photo / Van Payne / SBC Newsroom)

David Platt, president of the International Mission Board, described a recent trip to the Amazon, where he recalled telling indigenous people stories around the campfire each night about "Jesus, the one true God."

Globally, about 2.8 billion people have little or no knowledge of Christ and

the gospel, Platt said.

“We need churches that have a passion for calling out men and women to go where the gospel has not gone yet,” he said. “God is seeking and saving the lost. The gospel has power to change lives.”

The missions celebration also included testimonies by National Acteens Panelists Allison Agthe from Austin Baptist Church in Austin; Abby Kriss from Bethany Baptist Church in Callao, Va.; Daisy Major from Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Hickman, Ky.; and Emma Kirkemier from Asheville First Baptist Church in Gallant, Ala.

WMU presented its Dellanna West O’Brien Award for Women’s Leadership Development to Ruba Abbassi, chief executive officer of Arab Woman Today, a Christian ministry that operates in 22 Arabic-speaking countries in the Middle East and North Africa.